School Nurses Help Keep Students Healthy

The National Association of School Nurses and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that school districts provide a full-time school nurse in every school building.

School nurses are often the only health care provider in a school. Learn how school nurses care for students in their evolving role.

In the United States, more than 40% of school-aged children and teens have at least one chronic health condition, like asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, food allergies, or poor oral health.[1] Some students with chronic conditions may miss school more often than others, which can affect their academic performance. For these students, school nurses or health centers offer vital help every day in managing their conditions.

School nurses or other school health services staff may also be the first to identify chronic health conditions in students during routine health exams.

School nurses help students and families in many ways.

A school nurse can help students and their families:

- Get access to health insurance.
- Coordinate care by communicating between the family and health care providers.
- Educate families on what health care services are available to their child at school.

The benefits of school nurses reach beyond the school walls.

School nurses not only make a big difference for student health and academic achievement, but they can also save money. For every $1 spent on school nursing, society saves $2.20.[2] These savings come from preventing costly emergency room visits and parents missing time at work to care for sick children.

Some school nurses are assisting with employee wellness programs.

The roles and responsibilities of school nurses are expanding.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, school nurses played an important role in keeping schools open for in-person learning, while protecting the health and safety of students and staff.
- School nurses are setting up employee wellness programs to keep teachers and school staff healthy.
- School nurses are learning new skills to provide mental health services and referrals for students and their families.

More information

- CDC School Health Services
- CDC Managing Chronic Health Conditions in Schools
- CDC Family Engagement in School Health Services

References

1. 2020–2021 National Survey of Children's Health. Child and Family Health Measures. Accessed April 26, 2023. https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=9254&r=1&g=1002

2. Wang LY, Vernon-Smiley M, Gapinski MA, Desisto M, Maughan E, Sheetz A. Cost-benefit study of school nursing services. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2014;168(7):642–648.

School nurses promote a healthy and safe school environment. School nurses care for the entire school population—students and staff.

Last Reviewed: April 27, 2023

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